



Vernal_Comments, BLM_UT <blm_ut_vernal_comments@blm.gov>

Comments for the Vernal Field Office Lease Sale EA

1 message

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To: BLM <blm_ut_vernal_comments@blm.gov>

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Please defer all oil and gas leases near Dinosaur National Monument and within wilderness-quality lands from the December 2017 lease sale.

Oil and gas development would create air, light and noise pollution for visitors to Dinosaur National Monument, impairing the outstanding experience that Dinosaur currently offers. The measures that the BLM is proposing to address these concerns are not sufficient to protect visitor experiences. People don't want to drive through an industrial zone on their way to our park lands and then hear and see oil and gas rigs while they hike to viewpoints, raft through canyons and camp under the stars!

I frequently recreate in the monument and watch wildlife there. The parcels proposed for lease are used by a variety of wildlife. Birds from ID, WY, MT stage here in Jensen in high numbers, feeding on leftover small grain crops in fields throughout Jensen, in preparation for migrating to their first major stopover in the San Luis Valley of Colorado. From there, the majority of them move on to the Rio Grande Valley of New Mexico for the winter, including Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge. 1230 individuals were counted here in September 2016 by Utah Division of Wildlife Resources staff. Furthermore, the birds gathering at the Escalante Ranch represented 37% of all cranes counted in UT in 2016. Hundreds of birds remained in the Jensen area into November and several still remain in Jensen into December and early January. According to Dr. Rod Drewian, retired North American crane expert from University of Idaho, the Jensen, UT area is likely of greater year-round importance to the Rocky Mountain population of GSC than previously thought, as individuals are documented during winter bird counts indicate a small population of cranes winter here. This means Jensen, UT supports a small population cranes year-round. Needless to say, the Jensen area is significant for cranes and the Escalante Ranch in particular where parcel UT1217-070 is located.

These parcels are also frequented by elk, mule deer, pronghorn, coyotes, mountain lions, bobcat, eagles and other wildlife. Leases of the parcels adjacent to the monument's western boundary would diminish the wilderness character of the monument lands.

Additionally, research has revealed that this sites are rich with cultural artifacts and relics of the Fremont culture and earlier native peoples. Some researchers studying these sites near the Green River in this area have proposed that these locales are globally significant, being one of the few places on the planet where archeologists can show the transition from a hunter/gatherer to an agrarian-based society.

Leasing of the parcels near Dinosaur National Monument will also impact the area's tourism economy. Over 300,000 visitors currently visit the Utah side of the monument and that number has been increasing over the past several years.

The BLM is also proposing to lease lands with wilderness characteristics, including spectacular Utah wildlands in the Desolation Canyon and Book Cliffs areas. These places should be protected for their wilderness values, not handed over to the fossil fuel industry.

Our most special public lands should be preserved for future generations. I urge you to not offer the lease parcels near Dinosaur National Monument and in wilderness-quality lands.

Thank you
Dan Johnson

Sent from my iPhone